THE HISTORY OF ROCK

70p

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EDDIE COCHRAN

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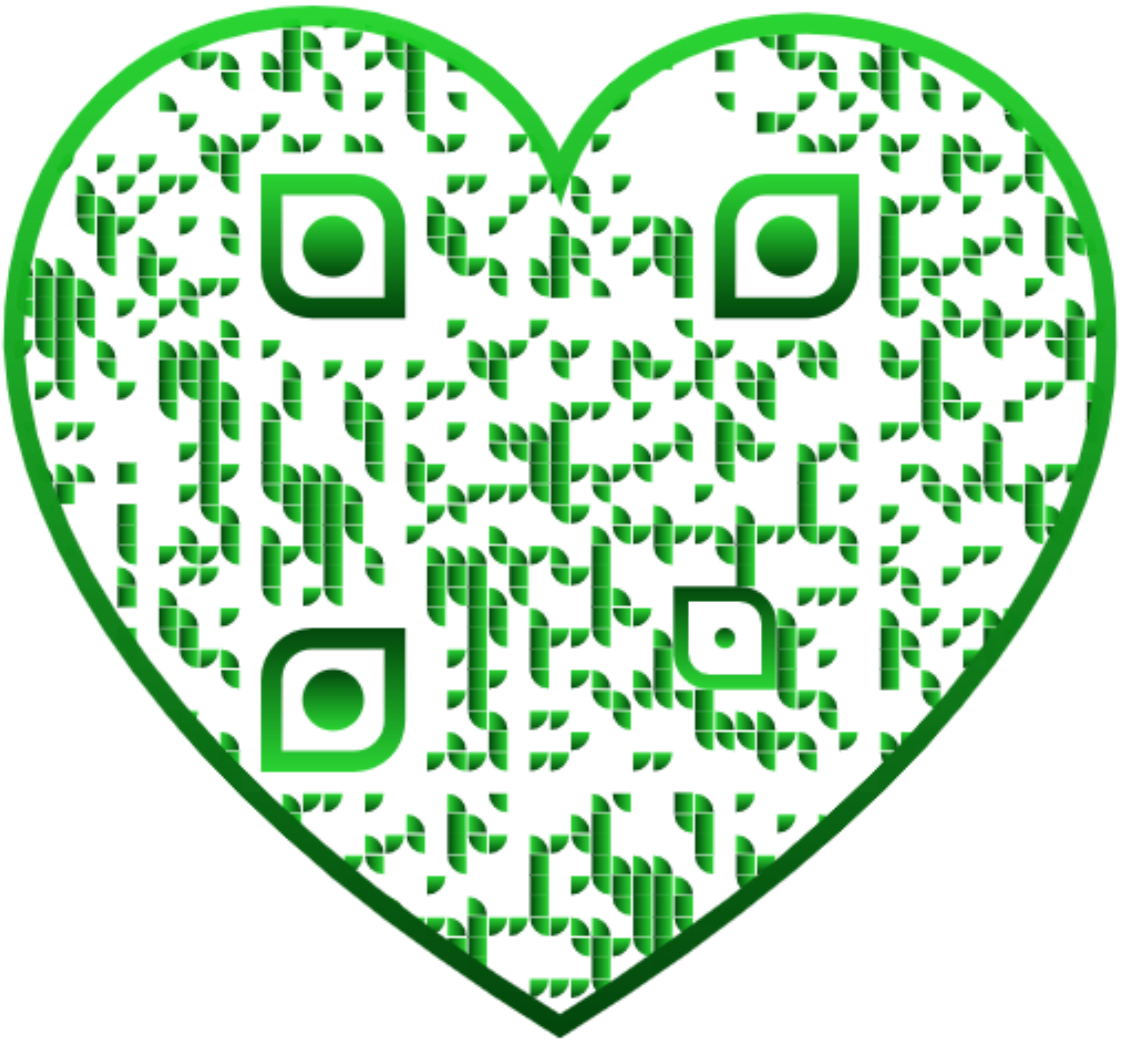

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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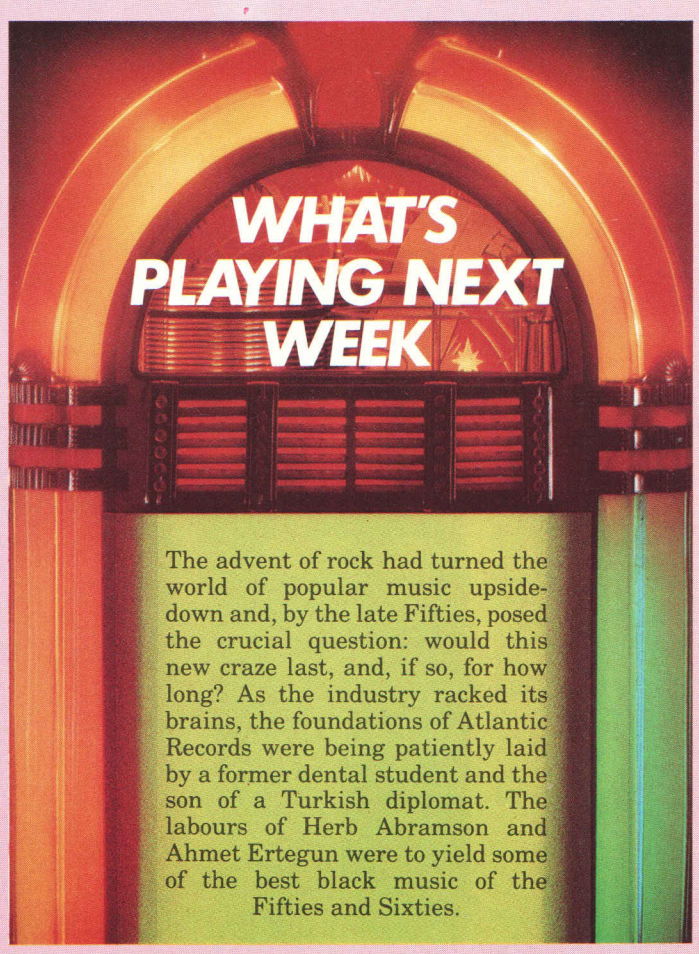

The advent of rock had turned the world of popular music upside-down and, by the late Fifties, posed the crucial question: would this new craze last, and, if so, for how long? As the industry racked its brains, the foundations of Atlantic Records were being patiently laid by a former dental student and the son of a Turkish diplomat. The labours of Herb Abramson and Ahmet Ertegun were to yield some of the best black music of the Fifties and Sixties.

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From National to International

By the late Fifties rock had the whole world in its hands

BY THE LATE FIFTIES rock'n'roll had become part of the music scene everywhere. It had permeated all American culture, from the major urban centres to the small towns of the great plains, and had spread abroad. Before 1955 rock'n'roll was virtually unheard of and yet within less than five years it was known worldwide: as a form of popular music its international success was without parallel.

Although rock was the most dynamic element in American popular music in the late Fifties, its acceptance was far from universal. Indeed, now that it was no longer a passing fad the opposition to rock'n'roll was all the stronger. The sources of this opposition were various and, surprisingly enough, a major one was the radio stations and DJs. The spread of rock had owed much to the air-time exposure it was given, but as a whole DJs had little interest in the music. Their musical preferences were revealed in a contemporary survey published by *Billboard*: of the DJs' 21 favourite records only three were rock'n'roll songs although in a list of 20 most played records there were eight rock'n'roll discs. And while Elvis Presley was the most played male vocalist, Frank Sinatra remained the favourite.

Those DJs that did promote rock'n'roll could find themselves out of a job. Over the border in Canada a British Columbia DJ was sacked for playing Screamin' Jay Hawkins' 'I Put A Spell On You' and the same fate befell an Oregon DJ who played Elvis Presley's version of 'White Christmas' – the management claimed 'the treatment was in extremely poor taste'.

'Help stamp out rock'

The counter-offensive against rock'n'roll by DJs and the radio stations often took bizarre forms: Charlie Hanson, DJ of Radio WISN in Milwaukee, publicly burnt 200 rock'n'roll records while DJs on Denver's Radio KDEN chanted over the airwaves, 'Help stamp out rock and roll. Patronise KDEN advertisers and KDEN, Denver's first station now busily engaged in stamping out rock and roll.'

NBC even released an album entitled *Music To Buy Time By* in which an announcer introduced a selection of rock'n'roll songs with derogatory and now humorously ridiculous comments: 'Peggy Sue' was 'music to steal hub caps by' and the Coasters were 'four fugitives from the hog-caller's seminar'.

These attacks and others from institutions traditionally hostile to rock'n'roll were, however, rearguard actions. 'Rock And Roll Is Here To Stay' sang Danny and the Juniors in 1958, and they were right. The massive enthusiasm of the young for rock'n'roll (expressed in equally massive record sales) proved too powerful a movement to be contained by the admonishments of the old.

The rapid development of rock'n'roll necessarily changed the medium. In a very short time rock'n'roll had 'grown-up': it had acquired its own tradition as a distinct musical form. No longer was it an amalgam of other recognised styles – country music with a black beat – but had become an independent, if always eclectic, music. In the late Fifties rock looked back on itself as much as it did to its old roots of blues, gospel and country. As early as 1957 Larry Williams had had a chart success with

Above: Gene Vincent, whose international appeal was boosted by foreign tours, played in Japan and Britain in 1959-60. In five days at Tokyo's Nichigeki Theatre, where the photograph was taken, Vincent drew crowds that totalled 290,000, which testified to the worldwide attraction of rock as a musical form that transcended language barriers. Left: Johnny Halliday, France's answer to Elvis, on a film set. Halliday covered top American and British hits with skill and attracted a huge and enthusiastic following on the Continent – even though his management appeared to spell his name in more than one way!

Rock stars used radio, TV, touring and films to enhance their exposure to their fans. Below: Eddie Cochran appeared in films such as The Girl Can't Help It, Untamed Youth and Go Johnny Go! *Right: DJ Alan Freed was a pioneer promoter of massive rock concerts. The billboard advertises an impressive line-up for a New York season in 1957.*

'Short Fat Fanny' which contained a number of references to older rock'n'roll classics that included 'Long Tall Sally' and 'Blue Suede Shoes'.

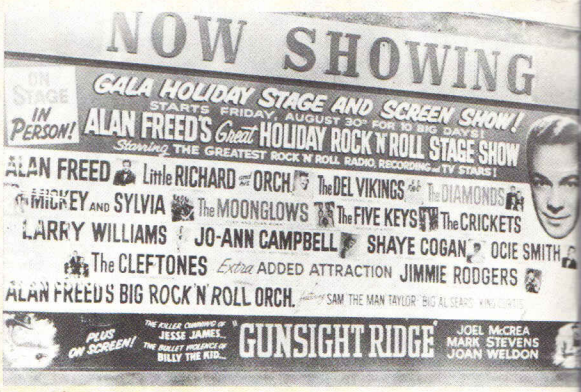
Oldies but goodies

A more telling example of rock'n'roll's tendency to look back on itself was the replaying of old hits on the radio as 'oldies but goodies' (also 'super oldies', 'golden oldies', 'golden goodies'). In 1958, for example, Alan Freed introduced a Little Richard disc from a few years earlier as a 'memory lane song'. At the end of the decade the playing of 'oldies but goodies' became a regular feature of radio programming in the United States. The record companies duplicated this move by issuing sets of stylistic compilations from the mid-Fifties.

The impact of rock'n'roll on popular music was such that old pre-rock songs were re-recorded and given a 'rock'n'roll' treatment. The best known of these songs was 'It's All In The Game' which had been a hit for Tommy Edwards in 1951. Edwards released a number of follow-ups but none did well. Then, in response to the rock'n'roll boom, he re-recorded 'It's All In The Game' in 1958. It became a Number 1 hit and stayed at the top for six consecutive weeks. The song 'went gold' and became one of the top three records of the year.

The new generation

A further aspect of rock's more widespread acceptance was the emergence of a second generation of rock artists. Unlike early pioneers such as Gene Vincent, Little Richard or Chuck Berry they were not creators of the sound, but had been drawn to rock'n'roll by its triumphs in the charts. Instead of taking crooners like Perry Como or Frank Sinatra as their models, young singers could take inspiration from rock itself. Although artists



like Fabian, Frankie Avalon, Bobby Darin and Ricky Nelson lacked the raw grit of early rock'n'roll they nonetheless carried on the tradition.

The national success of rock'n'roll made the top rock artists idols for the young throughout the country. The youth of most rock'n'roll artistes and the content of their songs made them become representatives of America's teenagers in ways impossible for film stars or other traditionally glamorous figures. Rock 'n'roll stars were figures not merely to dream about but to emulate, and during the Fifties teenagers throughout America began to form bands and aspire to rock'n'roll greatness. This was the breeding ground for the groups of the Sixties.

Home and abroad

The most important medium for the propagation of rock in the early Fifties had been radio; but the new, enthusiastic young musicians of the late Fifties often had the chance to see their heroes in action – not just on television, but in live shows. Large package tours brought rock stars to the towns of middle America; in the big eastern cities, Alan Freed and others put together series of concerts which let the kids see and hear the groups and singers who made the sounds. These tours took rock right to the heartland of the USA; they brought the music back to its roots and helped inspire the next generation. Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, the Drifters and countless lesser-known groups reproduced their vibrant sounds night after night, inspiring and converting their listeners.

And as rock consolidated and built up its second generation in the USA itself, it was, at the same time, making its first impact abroad.

As a musical phenomenon rock'n'roll was exceptional in that it crossed national and cultural boundaries with great ease and speed.

Whereas most popular music was confined to its national or even regional basis, rock 'n'roll transcended geographical limitations.

The rapid expansion of rock overseas was partly a consequence of the United States' position in the world during the Fifties. As the most powerful and prosperous state on the globe, the USA became the ideal for the rest of the world to model itself on. Just as various aspects of the American lifestyle – cars, fashions, refrigerators – were copied by other nations, so too was its music. And for the young this meant rock'n'roll. The export of America's newest musical form was helped by the nature of the music itself, which normally emphasised rhythm against lyrics (which were, in any case, often very simple) so reducing the language barrier to a minimum.

Not surprisingly Great Britain gave the most enthusiastic welcome to rock and it rapidly became an integral part of British popular music of the Fifties. The pattern by which countries adopted rock'n'roll was broadly similar: at first an interest in American originals, followed later by attempts at imitation – with varying degrees of success – and then finally some form of autonomous development.

Of course, there were regional variations. Outside of Britain, Germany was the major centre. British groups like Rory Storm and the Hurricanes and, later, the prototype Beatles made regular trips to Germany. In Southern Europe, rock'n'roll was adapted to suit Latin musical tastes. This led to intriguing imitations of American stars by people such as Johnny Halliday and Richard Anthony in France and Little Tony in Italy.

Outside of Western Europe the spread of rock'n'roll was more limited. Nevertheless its influence was strong enough to have it banned in a number of countries that included China, Iran, Egypt and Argentina.

Spreading the gospel

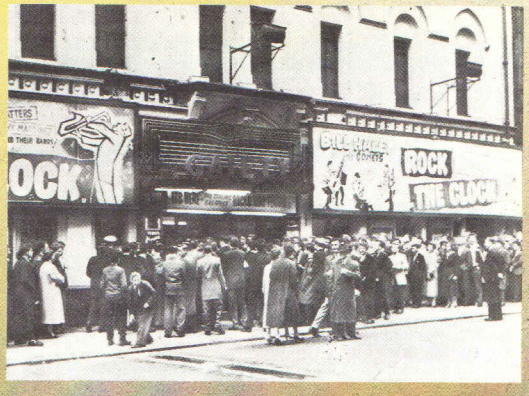
Just as within the USA, touring and packages were an integral part of the spread of rock abroad. The King himself, Elvis Presley, never played concerts outside the United States, but his career did include two years in Germany, from 1958 to 1960 during his service in the army, and his presence there undoubtedly helped to stimulate interest. European imitators of Presley were legion – from Per 'Elvis' Granberg in Sweden to Dick Rivers (named after a character Elvis had played in one of his films) in France.

Other stars were more willing than Elvis to take their music to the rest of the globe. Eddie Cochran, perhaps the last great rock'n'roller to come to prominence, enjoyed enormous popularity during his tour of Great Britain; Gene Vincent, too, was a star whose image and singing style shaped rock worldwide. Gene's tours of Great Britain, Australia and Japan had lasting influence. All over, the story was the same – Paul Anka inspired a devoted following in Finland, for example, during his European tour of 1959, and sparked the rock explosion there.

But although most American rock'n'roll artistes were prepared to tour Great Britain and even Western Europe occasionally, there were still relatively few opportunities for fans outside the States to see their stars performing live. The substitute for live shows lay in the rock films that proved immensely popular everywhere. Cheap and easy to distribute, they gave the fans access to the stars and at the same time gave the stars invaluable record promotion with minimal effort. As a means of popularising rock'n'roll outside of America and helping make it truly international, the cinema was an invaluable tool.

These twin processes – rock going back into the USA and rock spreading abroad – were to prove the salvation of the music, the means by which it was able to progress and to keep itself renewed. The 'second generation' of rock stars in the USA were to prove incapable of pushing the music forward with the verve of the original pioneers, but they were a symptom of how rock was becoming an intrinsic part of the national cultural framework; how the foundations were being laid for the achievements of the mid to late Sixties. Despite the often comic results, the Elvis imitators *did* help find the style that was to revitalise rock.

ADRIAN GILBERT



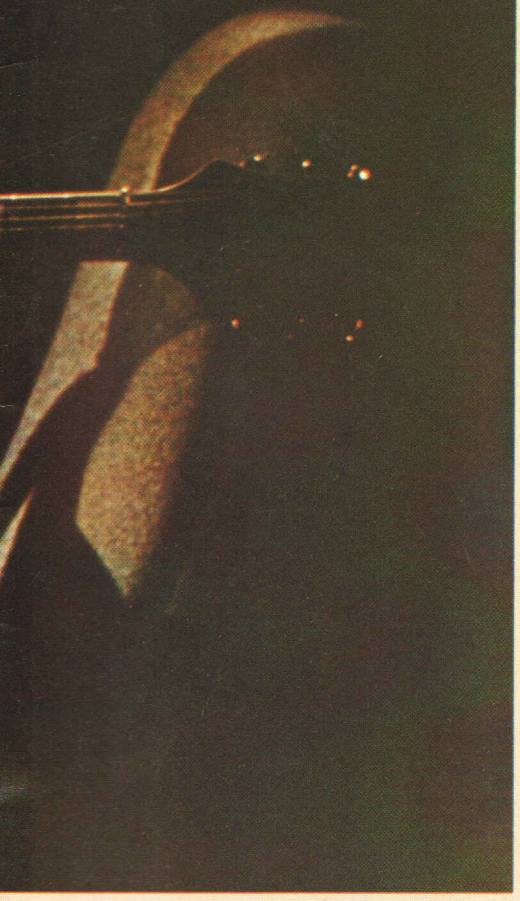
Below: Richard Anthony, one of the leading French rockers who modelled himself on the top American stars. Right: Canadian Paul Anka sang in Paris in late 1959 and was photographed with fans at a pre-concert reception. Far right: Germany took rock to its heart early on and Merseyside groups such as Rory Storm and the Hurricanes had established a solid following there by the late Fifties. Bottom: Rock Around The Clock, *perhaps the biggest single element in the internationalisation of rock, caused a commotion wherever it was shown. In Manchester in September 1956, crowds flocked to the Gaiety cinema the day after the fans had caused trouble.*

EDDIE COCHRAN

Was the Okie guitarist rock'n'roll's greatest talent?

EDWARD RAY COCHRANE was born on 3 October 1938 in Oklahoma City, the last of five children raised by Alice and Frank Cochrane. Soon after Eddie's arrival, the Cochranes moved north to the small town of Albert Lea, Minnesota, a community of some 20,000 souls lost in America's heartland 150 miles south of Minneapolis. Hunting, fishing, farming and the service industries associated with these were the boundaries of Eddie's world; beyond this, there was only radio and the cold winds blowing down from Canada. At school Eddie was, by all accounts, an able student with a somewhat haphazard interest in music – he enjoyed it, but drums, clarinet and, eventually, guitar all vied for his attention. In these formative years it was radio that provided Eddie with entertainment and instruction. His chief passion was the pop hit parade of the day, disposable ditties of the Forties, supplemented with country music on record and from local bands. He may also have listened to the rhythm and blues and jazz broadcast from Chicago or Detroit, but this influence is difficult to estimate. Eddie just picked along with the radio and unconsciously developed a catholic taste in music that was to remain with him all his short life.

In 1945 the family moved west to California, where they settled in the Bell Gardens District of Los Angeles. Here was a very different world, and it was hardly surprising that Eddie Cochrane should



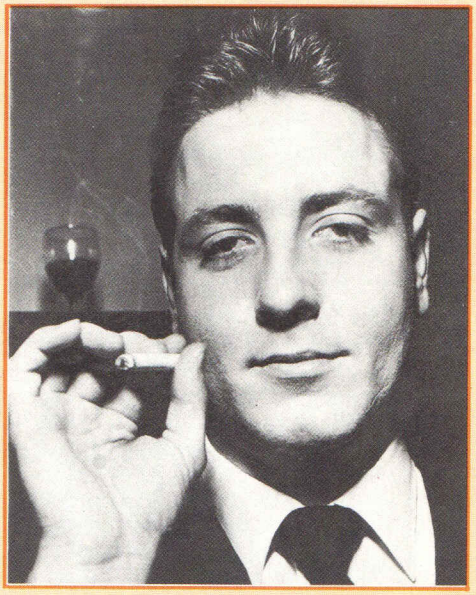
drop out of school early. He was a talented youth confronted with an unashamedly materialist society – two-car families, swimming pools, apartment blocks uptown, Hollywood glamour – and its dark underside among the have-nots. It was a world in which newly settled Chicanos rubbed shoulders with blacks from Texas and Louisiana who had established the urbane West Coast blues; bop was on the boil with Dexter Gordon and friends, R&B musicians like Johnny Otis were jamming at the Barrelhouse and Hunter Hancock was tearing up the airwaves, while country boogie artists such as Cliffie Stone, Merrill E. Moore and the Maddox Brothers were creating sounds the youngster would have found more familiar.

Adopting a brother

Around 1952 Eddie met a young bass player, Connie 'Guybo' Smith, and the two of them roamed the city pondering ways to gatecrash the music business. Cochrane enjoyed modest success the next year when he secured a gig entertaining municipal employees at the South Gate Town Hall Auditorium. Soon after this, he struck up acquaintance with Hank Cochran, a singing guitarist, and Eddie found himself touring the Southwest as one half of the Cochran Brothers, fronting a hillbilly band. Sometime between the autumn of 1954 and early in 1955, they

recorded for Hollywood's Ekko label, which also maintained offices in Nashville and Memphis. The first single by the (unrelated) Cochran Brothers was 'Two Blue Singin' Stars'/'Mr Fiddle', which was released in July 1955. The A-side of this hillbilly-style release was a tribute to Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams, replete with whining steel guitar, while both sides gave full scope to Harold Hensley, the label's resident country fiddler. The pattern was maintained in November when 'Your Tomorrows Never Come'/'Guilty Conscience' was issued, the material being reminiscent of Hank Williams and the early coupling of Buddy Holly with Bob Montgomery.

In 1955 Eddie Cochran (as he now called himself) discovered true Memphis-style rockabilly. Cochran and partner Hank were touring in New Mexico and Texas when they appeared on the same bill as Elvis Presley at the Big D Jamboree in Dallas. Presley's effect on Eddie, both in terms of sound and presentation, was devastating – so much so that Cochran hauled Hank off hundreds of miles to the Sun Studios in Memphis, where they auditioned, but were rejected. Nonetheless, the lesson was learned and their next release 'Fool's Paradise'/'Tired And Sleepy', which emerged in June 1956, reflected this experience. Sharing the lead



Cochran in moody pose (opposite); with 'brother' Hank in hillbilly days (inset); on stage with Jerry Capehart in 1955 (left) and adopting a sophisticated pose late in his career (above).

vocal, choking and sliding in close harmony, the duo yelped ecstatically over the slashing guitar breaks of the A-side. 'Tired And Sleepy' was equally riveting. Eddie Cochran is not often associated with rockabilly but he flirted briefly with the genre during 1955 and 1956 before settling down to establish a rock style of his own. Sides which might loosely be classified as rockabilly include the third Ekko single, Cochran Brothers demos like 'Latch On' or 'I'm Ready', those numbers such as 'Long Tall Sally' and 'Blue Suede Shoes' made in the shadow of Presley, and certainly some material from those sessions where Eddie sat in as guitarist with Bo Davis in 1956.

Demos and doo-wop

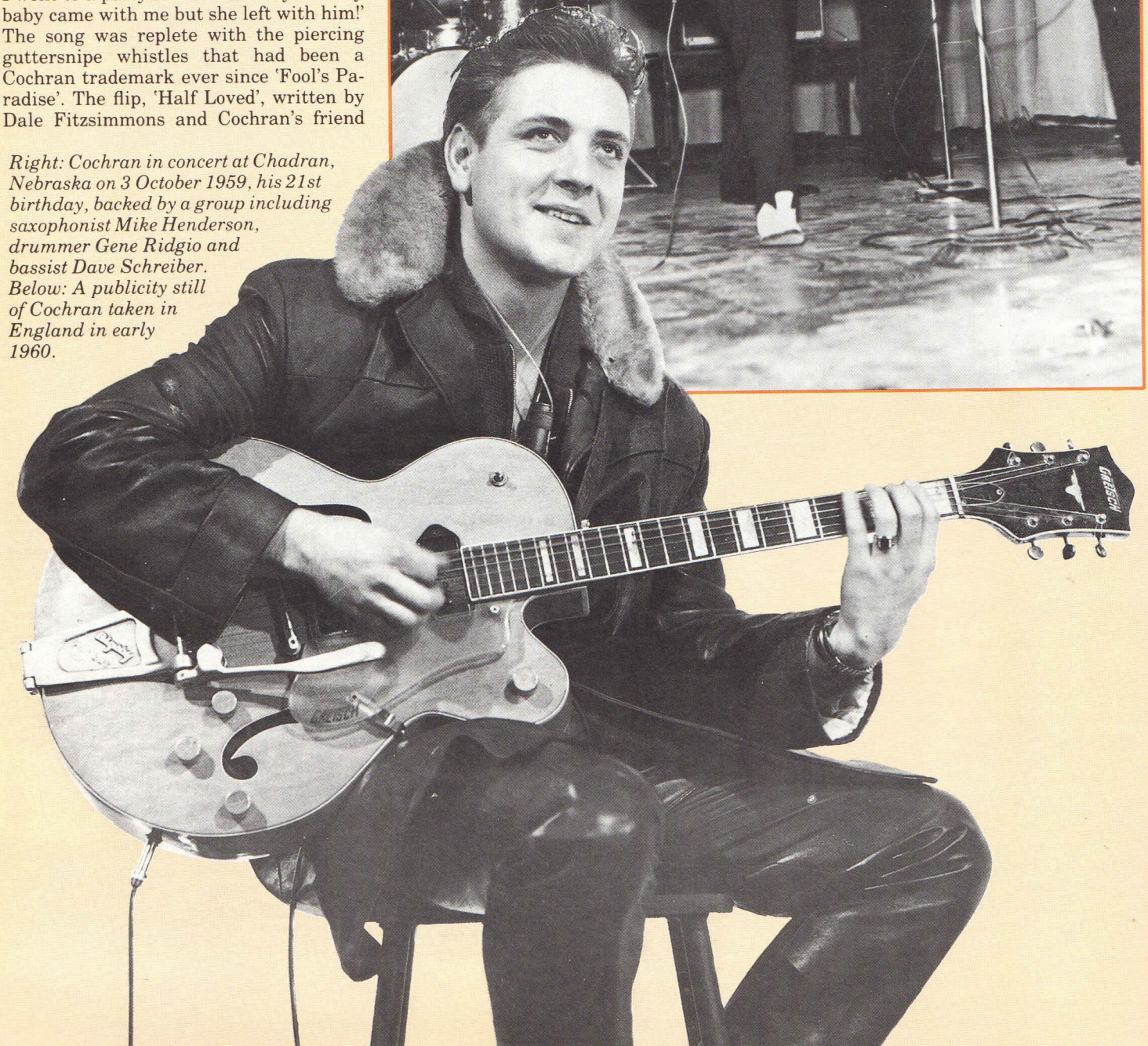
A chance meeting with Jerry Capehart late in 1955 at Bell Gardens Music Center opened a new chapter in Cochran's career. As Capehart recalled: 'I was in to buy guitar picks and he was looking for guitar strings. I had been searching for someone to make demonstration records of my songs and the store owner introduced me to Eddie.' Capehart moved rapidly and by February 1956 he had a record out in his own name, 'Rollin''/'Walkin' Stick Boogie' on the Cash label, on which he received sterling support from the Cochran Brothers and Guybo Smith. Soon after, Hank Cochran split, dissatisfied with the rapidly-changing Los Angeles rock business but still intent on a country music career; he eventually made a reputation as the writer of 'Make The World Go Away' and 'A Little Bitty Tear'.

Meanwhile Jerry Capehart took Eddie and Guybo Smith to American Music, a publishing subsidiary of Crest Records on Sunset Boulevard, where he secured them a songwriting and production deal. The

company and its subsidiary label Silver Records was owned by Sylvester Cross. His assistant was A&R man Dale Fitzsimmons and the small roster of artists included Vern Stovall, Bob Denton, Jack Lewis, The Four Young Men, Tommy Dee, Bill and Doree Post, Jewel Akens and Eddie Daniels, and a session guitarist and sometime singer called Glen Campbell.

One of Eddie's first assignments was doo-wop vocal support – though his voice is impossible to pick out – on Jack Lewis' unremarkable 'Butterscotch Candy And Strawberry Pie'. The next Crest single to be issued, however, was 'Skinny Jim'/'Half Loved', and was the first record Eddie Cochran put out in his own name. Both sides were cut at the outset of a Bo Davis session in September 1956 and were issued in the same month along with the Davis material. The single was significant in that it revealed two important facets of Cochran's talent. 'Skinny Jim', an R&B song penned by Cochran and Capehart, was a storming performance driven along by Eddie's guitar and outraged vocals. His wry humour was much in evidence: 'Well, I went to a party and met Skinny Jim/My baby came with me but she left with him!' The song was replete with the piercing guttersnipe whistles that had been a Cochran trademark ever since 'Fool's Paradise'. The flip, 'Half Loved', written by Dale Fitzsimmons and Cochran's friend

Right: Cochran in concert at Chadran, Nebraska on 3 October 1959, his 21st birthday, backed by a group including saxophonist Mike Henderson, drummer Gene Ridgio and bassist Dave Schreiber. Below: A publicity still of Cochran taken in England in early 1960.



Ray Stanley, was one of those rock ballads so gross that the listener is bludgeoned into unwilling submission. Evidently Cochran adored the bravura passion of Presley but, lacking the vocal control, he signally failed to emulate his idol.

Cochran makes movies

Jerry Capehart used 'Skinny Jim' to negotiate yet another record deal, this time through Sy Waronker who was head of the recently formed Liberty label. Together with Eddie and Guybo Smith, it was clear that Capehart envisaged a future on the production side and the terms he secured were generous. Cochran would continue to co-write songs for Sylvester Cross and record demos for Crest, but would release product for Liberty. Among the first fruits available to the company were 'Yesterday's Heartbreak', 'Completely Sweet', 'That's My Desire' and 'I Almost Lost My Mind'. The well planned path of Cochran's future now suddenly altered, however, as he made an unexpected entry into movies.

Cochran gave a laconic description of how he was spotted: 'I was doing one of these record dates [at Crest] one day and a fellow walked in there and it was just in-between takes so I was just sitting there picking on my own guitar. And he walked in, and he wanted to know if I wanted to make a movie as a singer. I told him "Yeah, I'll do it". I never had done too much singing, but I went out and cut a dub [acetate] of a song called "Twenty Flight Rock". I took it out to Twentieth Century Fox and they put me in *The Girl Can't Help It*. Right after that I signed up with Liberty Records.'

The release of the song was held over to synchronise with the international distribution of the film. Meanwhile, Liberty released a ballad, 'Sittin' In The Balcony', which reached Number 18 in the US Hot Hundred. Along with other soft-centred

songs from 1957 like 'Drive In Show', this John D. Loudermilk composition allowed Cochran to examine the mores of teenage Americans at the movies. Just when the sickly lyrics threatened to cloy, in came Eddie with the familiar, clanging reverb on one of his typically terse guitar breaks. The instrument he used was a Gretsch semi-acoustic, the neck pickup of which had been replaced with a Gibson humbucker, to which a Bigsby tremelo arm had been added. The result was a full, resonant tone that went well with Cochran's sparse style. From 1957, he was the most distinctive non-black guitarist on the West Coast, with the possible exception of Ritchie Valens. If Eddie had initially tried to become another Elvis, his instrumental mastery soon freed him. As Stan Ross, engineer at Los Angeles' Gold Star Studios, put it, Cochran 'was a different animal altogether. He developed his own style which was basically funky rock.'

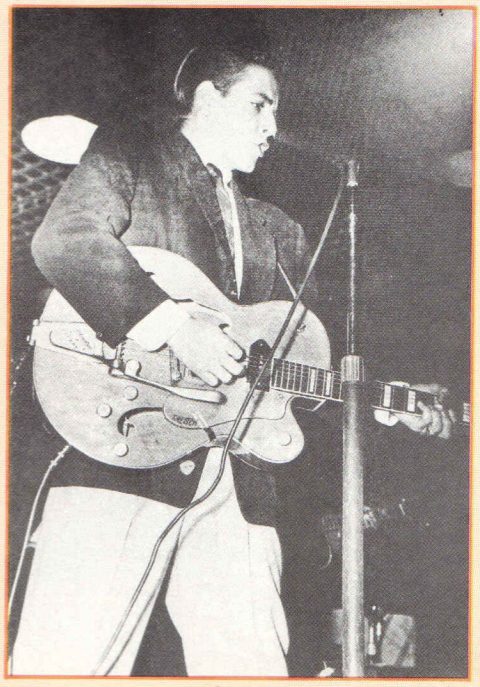
With Jerry Capehart as co-writer, Eddie Cochran sketched high-school drama with affection, sympathy and sly, self-deprecating humour. In charting the fevers of adolescence, their songs were often more effective than those recorded by Ricky Nelson or the Everly Brothers, largely because they avoided self-pity; even at the lowest ebb there was usually a redeeming assertiveness.

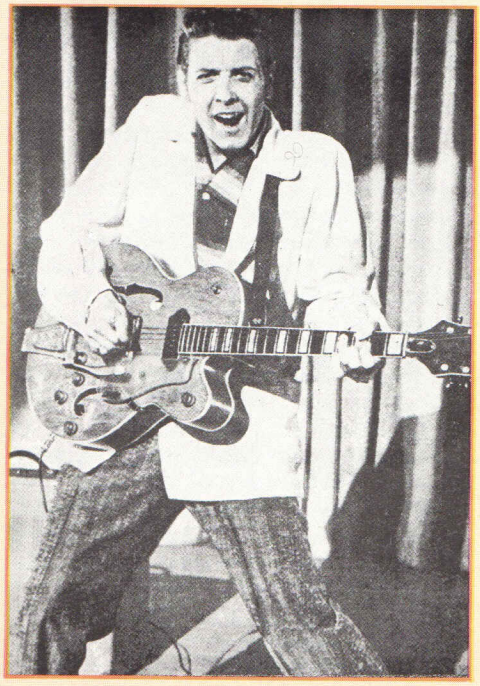
Cochran was seldom mean in the manner of Presley, Lewis or Vincent. Instead he preferred to chuckle at the catalogue of frustration in 'Weekend', adopting a deep voice to mock the over-zealous cop with a flashlight at every car window. It was much the same voice used to guy authority in 'Summertime Blues', where the hapless teenager is told 'You can't use the car 'cos you didn't work a lick!' The nearest Eddie got to menacing anyone was in the delinquent rumble of his guitar on 'Teenage Cutie' or with the jagged intensity of jams like 1959's 'Eddie's Blues'.

Back to the blues

Cochran's humour and his propensity for assuming voices and slang owed much to black groups like the Coasters and the Midnighters. During sessions for Crest, Silver, Freedom, Dot, Vik, Zephyr, Cash and Capehart Records, he played on and arranged many R&B sides. Obvious examples of ghetto jive include Ray Stanley's composition 'Quick Like', 'Don't Wake The Kids' by the Four Dots and the manic novelty 'I Hate Rabbits' by Jerry Neal (actually Jerry Capehart under a pseudonym). On Silver Records, Eddie backed Jewel Akens and Eddie Daniels on

Cochran (above) toured Australia in 1957, and is pictured (below left) fronting the band of Johnny O'Keefe. The Girl Can't Help It *had given Eddie a film role in 1956 (below), while it was at Hollywood's Gold Star Studios that Cochran was to make his greatest recordings (below right).*





Above left: Eddie writes another letter home on tour. Above: Cochran's death made the headlines, but wrote an untimely final chapter to his career.

'Doing The Hully Gully' and joined the Kelly Four – members of which frequently formed part of his backing band – on guitar for 'Annie Has A Party'/'So Fine, Be Mine'. At the Gold Star Studios, Cochran worked with such black musicians as Plas Johnson, Jackie Kelso and Earl Palmer on the records issued under his own name. His preoccupation with R&B at Liberty resulted in his own 'Pink Peg Slacks' and a string of covers of rhythm and blues standards, including Ivory Joe Hunter's 'I Almost Lost My Mind' (1956), Eddie Daniels' 'Little Lou' (1958), the Sleepy John Estes-Kokomo Arnold hybrid 'Milk Cow Blues' and Ray Charles' 'Hallelujah I Love Her So' (1959). Another of Cochran's fruitful musical relationships was with the temperamental Gene Vincent. Eddie appeared on the *Hot Rod Gang* EP with Vincent, and arranged Vincent's recording of 'Pistol Packin' Mama'.

Like his friend Buddy Holly, Cochran deliberately cultivated a multi-faceted career as artist, writer, producer and arranger. His stated ambition was to be 'as versatile as Sammy Davis Junior'. After Frank Tashlin's accomplished *The Girl Can't Help It*, Eddie appeared in two more pictures, *Untamed Youth* (1957) and *Go Johnny Go*! (1959), both crudely exploitative, which did little to enhance his career. Nonetheless they were part of his desire to be an all-round entertainer. In 1957 he made the *Singin' To My Baby* album featuring the Johnny Mann Singers under the auspices of Tommy 'Snuff' Garrett, one of the new breed of successful pop producers who were knocking the rough edges off rock'n'roll. This was city-slicker mood music several thousand miles from the Mississippi cornfield hollering of Hank Cochran. Eddie wavered his way through hoary standards like 'Am I Blue' and a collection of dubious ballads. The album was, by Capehart's own admission, a career gambit, an attempt 'to give Eddie more identity *as a singer*'.

Eddie Cochran arrived in the UK on 10 January 1960 for a 13-week tour, interrupted only by a brief return visit to the US. He was paid a salary of 1000 dollars per week for his stint of touring, and appeared on TV with such indigenous stars as Joe Brown, Marty Wilde and Georgie Fame. He undoubtedly influenced these British rockers.

Cherished memories

A desire to enter the mainstream of popular crooning was still apparent on Eddie Cochran's final in England. During an otherwise exemplary rock set on Jack Good's 'Boy Meets Girl' TV show he suddenly offered the unadulterated showbiz of Teddy Randazzo's 'I Don't Like You No More'. It was, perhaps, this ambition that recommended him to English audiences, but there is no saying where it might have led had he lived. As it happened, Eddie Cochran was catapulted into the roof of his hired car on the road from Bristol on 16 April 1960 and died just after four o'clock on the afternoon of the following day, Easter Sunday. Ironically, he had been scheduled to fly home on the Monday, and, by some morbid chance, Cochran's final recording session, on 8 January at Gold Star Studios, had included 'Cherished Memories' and 'Three Steps To Heaven'. Also involved in the accident were Gene Vincent and Sharon Sheeley, Cochran's girl-friend of some two years' standing with whom he had written 'Somethin' Else'. Both Vincent and Sheeley eventually recovered to continue their respective performing and songwriting careers, Sharon forming a successful partnership with Jackie DeShannon.

Cochran's musical output was relatively small and yet the public's fascination with his music has continued to grow. The songs' lasting worth has been frequently re-emphasised by the number of artists who have successfully recorded versions of Cochran's best-known hits. 'Summertime Blues', 'C'mon Everybody' and 'Somethin' Else' have been covered by bands from the Who to the Sex Pistols, while 'Cut Across Shorty' was tackled with typical panache by Rod Stewart in the early Seventies. Even Pepsi-Cola commercials in the Eighties have utilised the music of this erstwhile hillbilly singer, a man whose abilities as singer, writer, musician and producer made him the most widely talented rock star of the Fifties.

CLIVE ANDERSON

EDDIE COCHRAN
Discography

Singles
The Cochran Brothers
Two Blue Singing Stars/Mr Fiddle (Ekko 1003, 1954); Guilty Conscience/Your Tomorrows May Never Come (Ekko 1005, 1955); Tired And Sleepy/Fool's Paradise (Ekko 3001, 1955).

Jerry Capehart with the Cochran Brothers
Walkin' Stick Boogie/Rollin' (Cash 1021, 1955).

Eddie Cochran
Skinny Jim/Half Loved (Crest 1025, 1956); Sittin' In The Balcony/Dark Lonely Street (Liberty 55056, 1957); Mean When I'm Mad/One Kiss (Liberty 55070, 1957); Drive-In Show/Am I Blue (Liberty 55087, 1957); Twenty-Flight Rock/Cradle Baby (Liberty 55112, 1957); Jeannie, Jeannie, Jeannie/Pocket Full Of Heartaches (Liberty 55123, 1958); Pretty Girl/Theresa (Liberty 55138, 1958); Summertime Blues/Love Again (Liberty 55144, 1958); C'mon Everybody/Don't Ever Let Me Go (Liberty 55166, 1959); Teenage Heaven/I Remember (Liberty 55177, 1959); Somethin' Else/Boll Weevil Song (Liberty 55203, 1959); Hallelujah I Love Her So/Little Angel (Liberty 55217, 1960); Cut Across Shorty/Three Steps To Heaven (Liberty 55242, 1960); Sweetie Pie/Lonely (Liberty 55278, 1960); Weekend/Lonely (Liberty 55389, 1960).

The Kelly Four
Strollin' Guitar/Guybo (Silver 1001, 1959); Annie Had A Party/So Fine, Be Mine (Silver 1006, 1959).

Jewel and Eddie
Opportunity/Doin' The Hully Gully (Silver 1004, 1960); Strollin' Guitar/Opportunity (Silver 1004, 1960).

Jerry Neal
I Hate Rabbits/Scratchin' (Dot 15810, 1958).

Albums (selective)
Singin' To My Baby (Liberty LP 3061); *12 Of His Biggest Hits* (Liberty LP 3172); *Never To Be Forgotten* (Liberty LP 3220); *Legendary Masters No 4* (United Artist UAS LP 9959); *Eddie Cochran Singles Album* (United Artist UAK 30244); *20th Anniversary Box Set* (United Artists EC SP20) (Comprehensive multi-record set of Cochran's recordings).

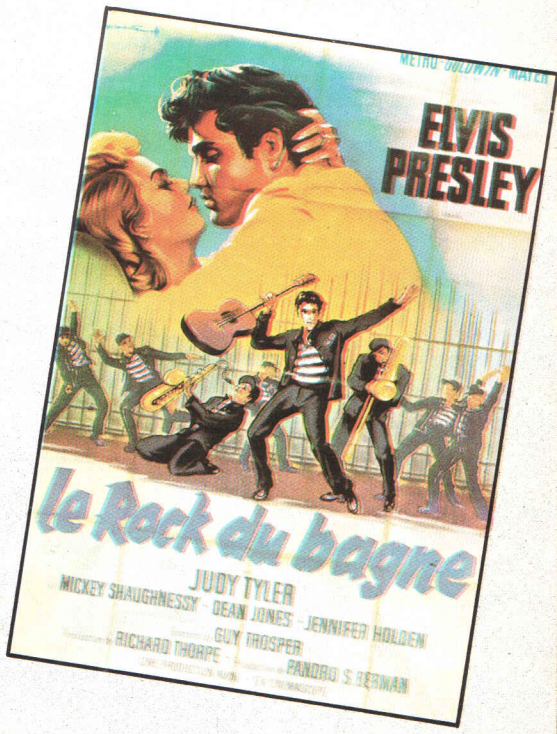
Rockin' all over the World

The echoes of the US rock revolution spread worldwide

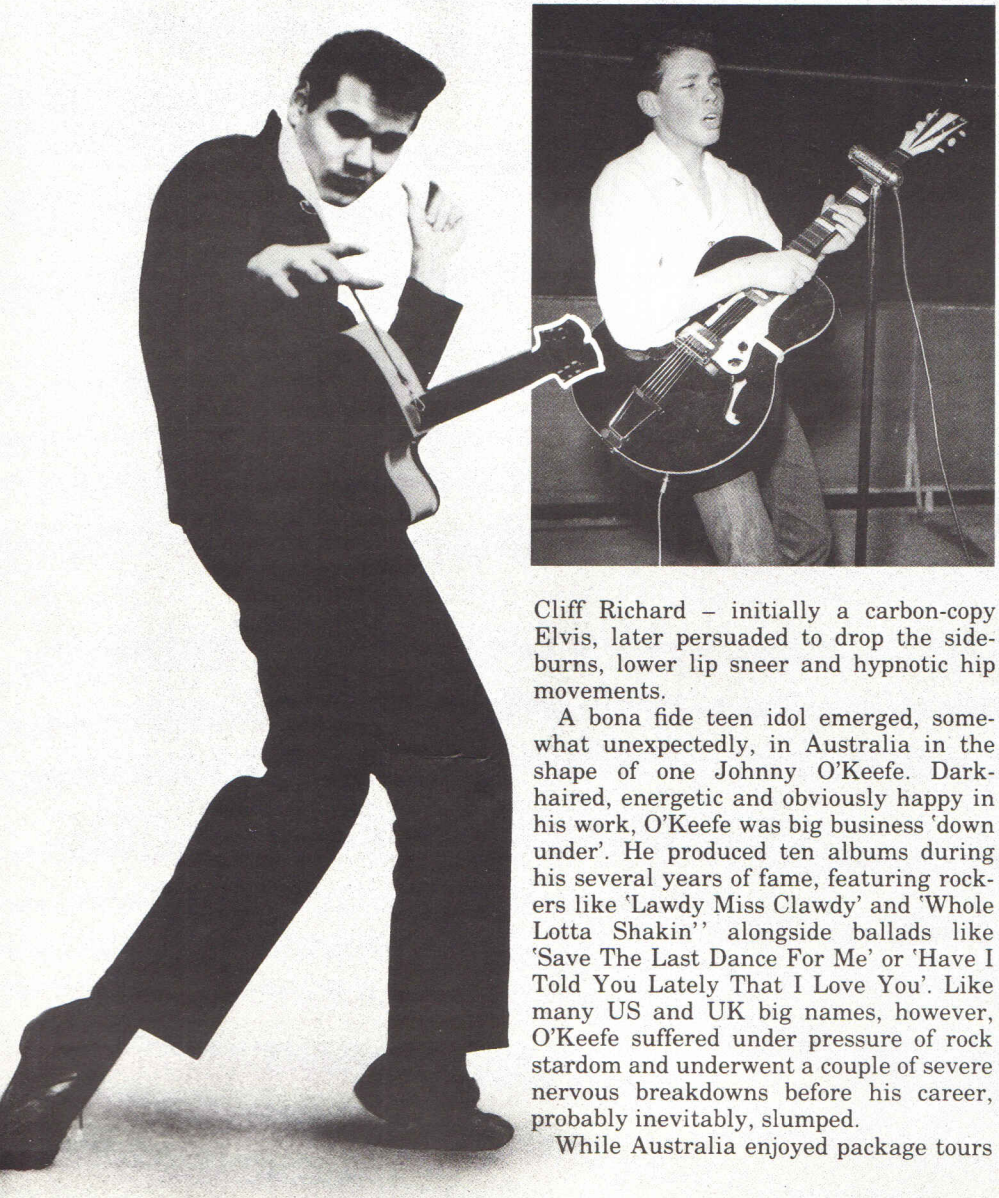
ROCK 'N' ROLL erupted first in the United States, then crossed the Atlantic to devastate the United Kingdom with a tidal wave of movies and music. And soon its impact spread even further, hitting nations previously unmarked even by earlier and milder manifestations of Anglo-American popular music. Rock music was formally banned in Indonesia, for instance, one bleak day in February 1957. It was officially outlawed in Argentina, too, the very next day, showing how fast bad news travels. The authorities used teargas to incapacitate rioting rockers in South Africa, while church authorities in many territories preached fervently against it. Siam became the next country to ban the music, describing it as 'dangerous and anti-social'.

So rock'n'roll had a rough ride. In the end, it broke through virtually everywhere to become truly international – and flourished worldwide even as it went into temporary decline in the United States. And the most influential figure in spreading the new music was, inevitably, Elvis Presley.

Presley imitators sprang up worldwide. In Britain there was Tommy Steele, Terry Dene and, most successful of all, there was



'Jailhouse Rock' in French looked strange, (above), while Peter Kraus (below left) played Presley German-style.



Cliff Richard – initially a carbon-copy Elvis, later persuaded to drop the sideburns, lower lip sneer and hypnotic hip movements.

A bona fide teen idol emerged, somewhat unexpectedly, in Australia in the shape of one Johnny O'Keefe. Dark-haired, energetic and obviously happy in his work, O'Keefe was big business 'down under'. He produced ten albums during his several years of fame, featuring rockers like 'Lawdy Miss Clawdy' and 'Whole Lotta Shakin'' alongside ballads like 'Save The Last Dance For Me' or 'Have I Told You Lately That I Love You'. Like many US and UK big names, however, O'Keefe suffered under pressure of rock stardom and underwent a couple of severe nervous breakdowns before his career, probably inevitably, slumped.

While Australia enjoyed package tours from US performers, Germany benefited in a different way from imported rock influences, with artists like Little Richard swiftly finding fanatical followings in the steamy clubs of Hamburg. When the Beatles, emerging from the Liverpool beat boom at the turn of the decade, took their music to feed the German rock'n'roll appetite, fellow Merseyside music-makers like Rory Storm and the Hurricanes, Cass and the Casanovas, Howie Casey and many others were already well established there.

Nobody demanded anything original. The fans in the Kaiserkeller and Star clubs in Hamburg merely required John Lennon to leap around like Gene Vincent

Ted Herold (far left) was another German Presley, while Johnny O'Keefe (centre, below) rocked Fifties Australia.

and all available Beatles to stamp heavily and play loudly for hours on end. Songs? If John and Paul had even thought of 'Yesterday' or 'Michelle' by then, such schmaltz would not have been welcome. 'Tutti Frutti', on the other hand, had such meaningless lyrics that it ran into no linguistic problems when performed in Hamburg, Paris, Tokyo or Johannesburg.

But, as elsewhere, the arrival of rock did open up the record industry in Germany. Whole new markets were discovered and, although foreign stars were the first to exploit them, local artists countered the intrusion of foreign bands by attempting cover versions of US and, later, UK chart hits. Eventually indigenous names like Ted Herold, Peter Kraus and the Rattles became established.

Germany fast developed as the third-biggest rock melting-pot worldwide after the US and UK. The Beatles couldn't play their brand of rock anywhere outside Liverpool in the UK, and not many places outside Hamburg in Europe. Paul McCartney remains proud to this day of the way he learned 'Wooden Heart', from Presley's *GI Blues*, a movie partly set in Germany, and performed it as a passable Presley take-off.

The French connection

In France, Johnny Halliday was to rule the roost in a rock sense. He covered all the leading American hits, developing a style referred to as 'ye-ye' in Parisian pop circles. Though he started in the late Fifties, he was to build to a million-seller peak with a multi-lingual version of 'Let's Twist Again' in the pre-Beatle Sixties.

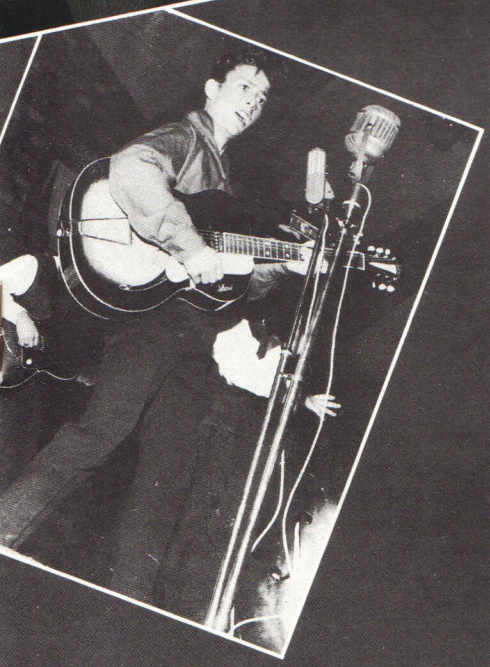
Halliday merged rock with more traditional elements of French male song styles, and was so authentic in his Presley delivery that it was rumoured he was actually an American. In fact he was born in Paris, his real name Jean-Philippe Smet. But he was probably the biggest European rocker in the early Sixties.

Another major French artist to take rock into the general market place of the 'Chansons françaises', with its long-established mood of shoulder-shrugging emotional despair, was Richard Anthony. He copied some Jerry Lee Lewis tricks, and occasionally played the piano with his feet.

And there was Dick Rivers. Deke Rivers was a Presley movie character. Dick Rivers was doubtless born with an unmistakably French name (long-since forgotten), but he was one of the first to realise that having an American or British-sounding stage name helped give an aura of authenticity. Vince Taylor, also big in France, was English. He was another darkly-brooding character straight from the Presley mould. Two other French rock singers worthy of note were Eddie Mitchell and Claude François.

The build-up of rock in Canada was surprisingly slow; the nation did not get its first music trade magazine until 1964, for instance. But the pathway to rock

Left: Italy's Little Tony adopts a universal rock pose. Right: Colin Hicks, seen with brother Tommy Steele, was also successful in Italy. Below right: France's rock fans were well served by Johnny Halliday and his covers of US hits. Bottom right: Per 'Elvis' Granberg in action. Below: US citizen Ronnie Hawkins found fame in Canada with The Band.



success was illuminated by Paul Anka, who wrote and sang 'Diana' in 1957. Anka, the Canadian citizen set to become pop's youngest millionaire, inspired many.

Wild-man Ronnie Hawkins crossed the border from the US in 1958 with his band, the Hawks including Levon Helm; guitarist Robbie Robertson was soon enrolled. In the end, it all led to the formation of the Band; in the beginning, fronted by Hawkins, it brought rock to Canada, in particular to Toronto.

For most Canadian musicians, the breakthrough to fame was very elusive. David Clayton-Thomas, later lead singer with Blood, Sweat and Tears expended just those three ingredients during a decade of struggle for recognition in Toronto. Canada was under the cultural umbrella of the United States... and Canadians couldn't become stars there until they had succeeded abroad. A valid contribution to US rock was made, however, by the Diamonds and the Crew Cuts; both groups flourished in the doo-wop field in the late Fifties.

Little Tony and Rock-Olga

Back in Europe, Little Tony was the biggest name in the Italian rock world; his fame spread to the UK, where he had a Top Twenty Hit with 'Too Good' in 1960. In his home country, US movies and a few specialist programmes on the national broadcasting network (RAI) spread the word about rock. Milan became the rock capital, and there was all-night jiving at the Santa Tecla Club. Adriano Celentano was one of the early pre-Sixties rockers, and later became established as a pillar of the pop world there – just as Cliff Richard did in the UK.

Italy became a happy hunting ground for one Colin Hicks. He was the look-alike younger brother of Tommy Steele, Britain's first rock idol – and as such was ignored, rejected and generally rebuffed by the British fans. But he did well in Italy for a while.

Little Richard's influence extended to Scandinavia: Little Glimsted and the more successful Little Gerhard were early converts – the latter triumphed with a Swedish cover of Louis Prima's 'Buona Sera'. This single sold 158,000 copies in Sweden – and only Presley himself matched that kind of sale north of the Baltic Sea. Most Swedish rockers of the late Fifties used their first names, prefixed by the tag 'Rock', so there was Rock-Ragge, one of the earliest pioneers, Rock-Boris, who had played piano with Rock-Ragge, Rock-Lenne, Rock-Olga, biggest of the girl rockers, and Rock-Love. The instrumental group the Spotnicks, enjoyed four hits in the UK, but theirs was an isolated success in international terms.

In Finland, which for its size has proved a very lively musical territory over the years, rock was first heard on Presley and Haley record releases and sundry movies in 1957. Paul Anka's visit in 1959 was a major catalyst in rock's drive to acceptance in Finland; he outsold even Presley. In the early days, Helsinki's Culture House staged a national contest to find the most likely Finnish Elvis; the winner, 17-year-old Rock-Jerry, successfully took on similar competition winners from other Scandinavian countries. Rock-Jerry retired, officially, in 1961. Maybe he had a premonition that the Beatles were on the way ... but in Norway Per 'Elvis' Granberg continued to rock on, supported by acts like Little Sophus, Jan Rodhe and Roald Stensby.

Communo-rock

Breaking through in Eastern Europe was tough for rock music. It was regarded as being essentially bad for morale if for no other reason than that it emanated from the United States, centre of all capitalistic corruption. But in Poland, early in 1959, a group called Rhythm and Blues played a gig in the Red-Haired Cafe in Gdansk; and that was the start of an underground rock movement. Local fans had 'illegal' rock records sent in as gifts; they could also hear foreign radio programmes. A journalist named Franciszek Walicki emerged as 'father of Polish rock and roll'. Perhaps inevitably, he became known as 'Poland's Alan Freed', in homage to the US disc jockey. Rock developed very slowly indeed in virtually all the communist countries, particularly in Russia. In Yugoslavia, the music was basically rejected – even by the public – until after the Beatles started a new era.

Over most of the globe, the story of rock was one of success, however. And the basic pattern was always the same: infiltration of US and British records, followed by a proliferation of local impersonators and then a mushrooming of little clubs where rockers met to roll. The movie *Rock Around The Clock* was a key vehicle for transporting the excitement. It provoked riots just about everywhere, and helped give rock'n'roll both widespread publicity and a bad name with the police, politicians and judiciary.

Even in Japan, where there were cultural problems and pronunciation hassles – rock'n'roll tends to trip off the Japanese tongue as 'lock and lorr' – the basic beat caught on, and eventually local acts emerged to sell extremely well. Perhaps because they were an instrumental group, the Ventures from the United States became superstars in Japan.

The truly international stars came, almost exclusively, from the United States or Britain, but local heroes managed to enjoy brief spells in the spotlight. There were always language problems – in spite of the widespread acceptance of English – and many non-English rock songs or groups (Os Daltons and Os Sheikhs in Portugal, for example) sound quaint to Anglo-Saxon ears. But rock had something that transcended all language barriers – a beat that all the world could move to. That beat made rock a worldwide phenomenon.

PETER JONES

Bringing it all back home

Package tours brought the stars back to their roots

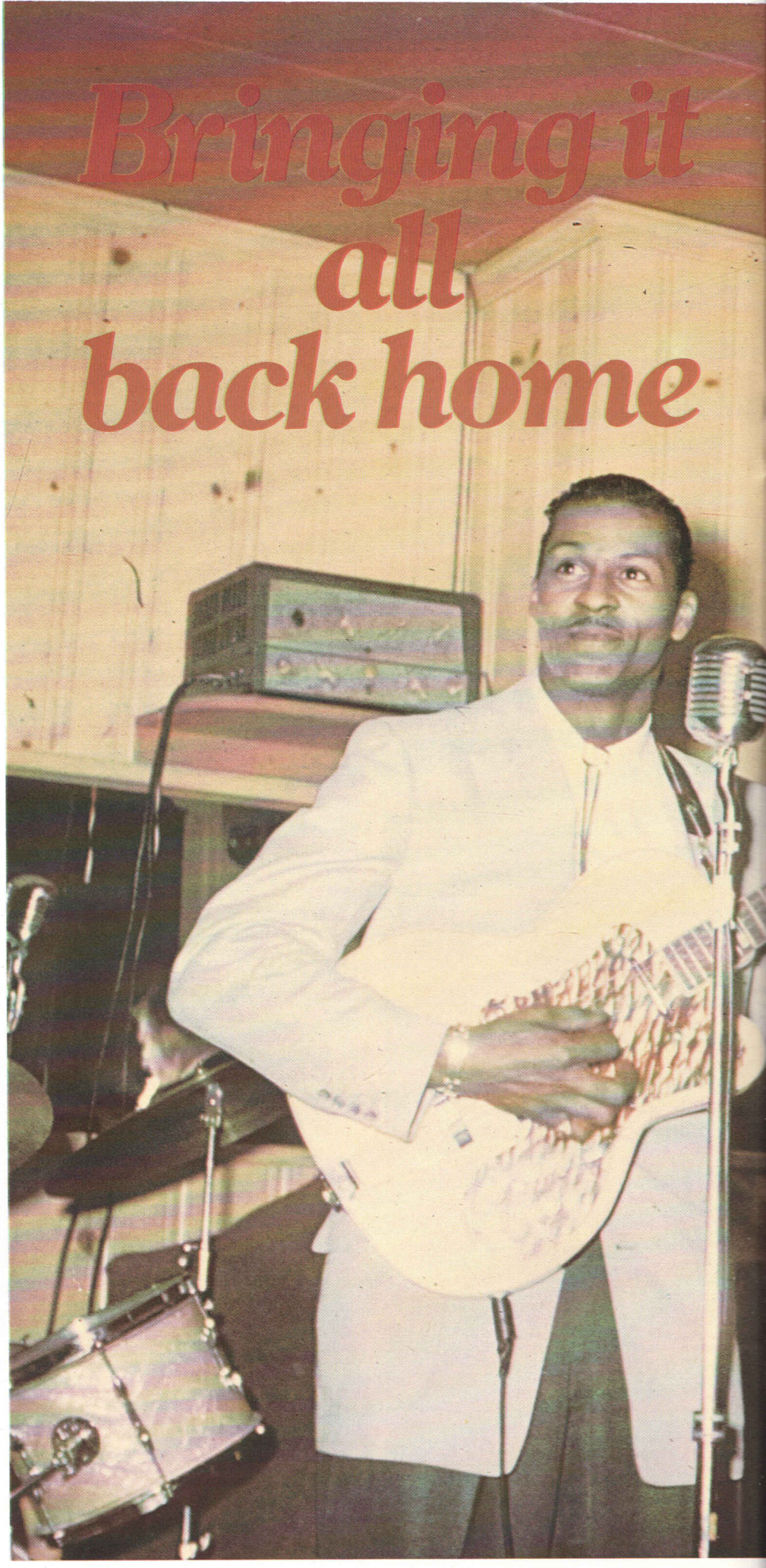
SINCE THE LATE SIXTIES most people living in even moderately-sized cities have had the opportunity to see a great variety of live rock music in an equally great variety of settings. In a major metropolis like New York or Los Angeles, the sheer number of competing concert halls, cafes and clubs offers the live music fan endless possibilities for an evening's entertainment. Back in the early days of rock'n'roll, however, the logistics of live concerts or tours were such that audiences rarely got to see and hear their favourite stars in person. Instead, most performers relied heavily on the media, through the network of fan magazines and television and movie appearances, for visibility among teenagers.

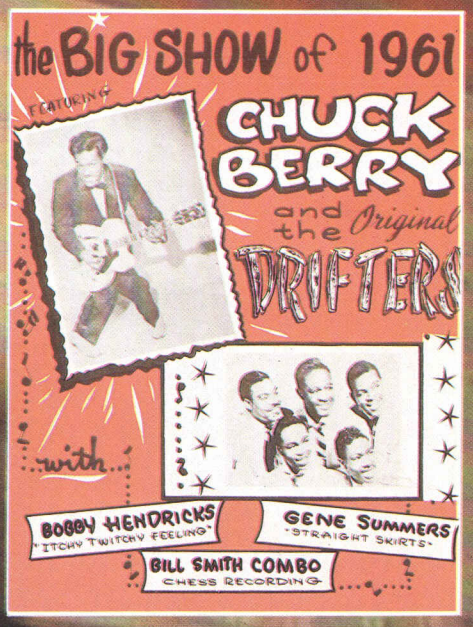
Artists with hit records would land a spot on a nationally-viewed television programme, such as the 'Ed Sullivan Show' or 'American Bandstand,' lip-synching their latest recordings. Good exposure on TV could then lead to a cameo appearance in a film, usually a film specifically aimed at the teen market, like Jerry Lee Lewis roughhousing it through the theme song from *High School Confidential* or the Platters performing a number in *Rock All Night*. Often, the films were nothing more than the threadbare boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl, boy-gets-girl plot set to a rock'n'roll background, with some 'name' stars popping up briefly on screen to help bolster interest and, hopefully, box office receipts. But television and film allowed performers to reach millions of potential fans through one single performance – a performance that could help catapult a new single into the upper reaches of the charts.

Performers, promoters and profits

Still, there was the desire and need of both performers and audiences to relate to each other on a more immediate and intimate level than just through records and the screen. Concert tours were promoted with the help of numerous promoters across the country, eager to try and make a profit out of the new teen music craze. Taking their form mainly from the rhythm and blues travelling revues that criss-crossed the US by bus and train throughout the late Forties and early Fifties, the standard rock'n'roll tour assemblage was a multi-faceted affair, with solo artists, harmony groups, self-contained combos and orchestras each contributing small three or four-song segments towards a two or three-hour programme of live rock'n'roll.

One of the first big rock'n'roll concerts, and perhaps the most important one from a historical viewpoint, was that organised by pioneer rock'n'roll disc jockey Alan Freed in Cleveland in March of 1952. Freed's radio show, 'Moondog's Rock 'n'Roll Party', was one of the most popular in the city and, to celebrate its success, he

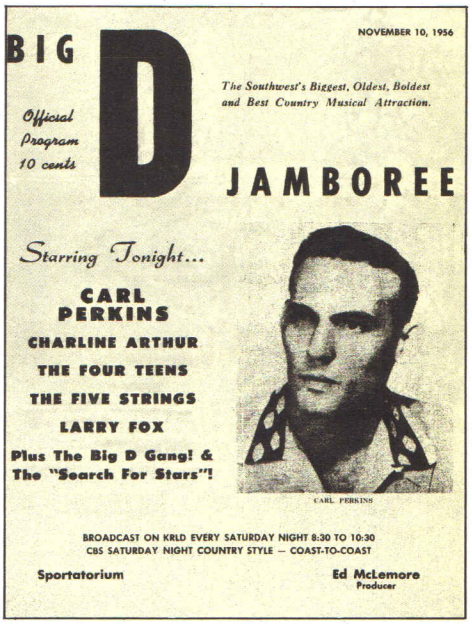




put together a line-up of stars whose records were often heard on his programme and rented the 10,000-seat Cleveland Arena to house the show. The night it was scheduled, some 25,000 people showed up, causing a minor riot, postponement of the show, and national attention.

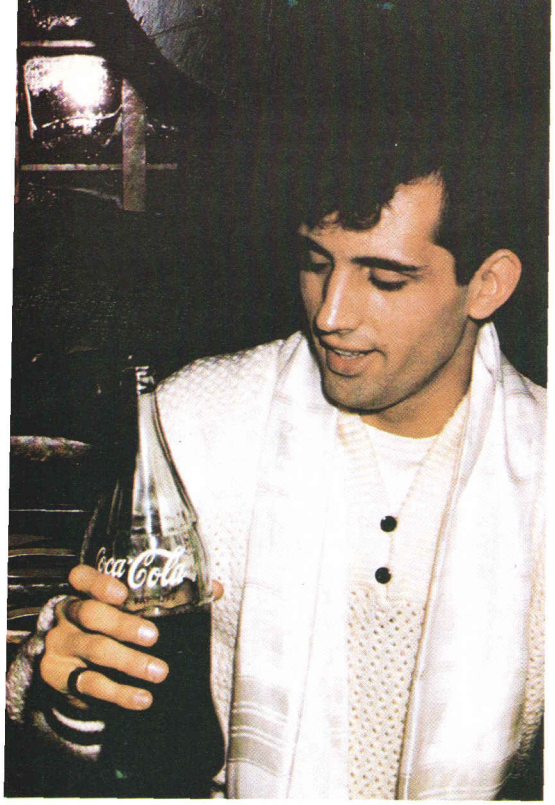
Due in part to the visceral impact that the new music was having on its audience and the bad reputation that the establishment ascribed to rock'n'roll and its fans,

Left: Package tours took Chuck Berry from Cleveland clubs to headline status (inset below). Inset left: Brenda Lee toured in 1960 with co-stars Bob Luman (third left) and Dorsey Burnette (second right). Below: A typical country bill of 1956.



most theatre owners and arena managers were not disposed to lease out their space, lest these crazed teenage heathens tear the whole place apart to the strains of this devil's music. Because of this, early rock 'n'roll shows tended to be confined to movie houses or roller rinks. And so, through the mid-Fifties, rock'n'roll shows in most major cities took place in something less than ideal settings. Still, take place they did, through the efforts of enterprising disc jockeys like Alan Freed and George 'Hound Dog' Lorenz of Buffalo, New York, and risk-taking promoters like Irvin Feld who pooled together resources to set up tours through most parts of the USA.

By the late Fifties, rock'n'roll was starting to become more acceptable to the establishment: it no longer seemed the threat to the moral and social order it had appeared in 1955 and, was also proving itself a highly profitable part of the music business. Consequently the range and number of venues for rock'n'roll concerts expanded, thereby facilitating the setting up of package tours. If the tour had a good roster of artists then large crowds could be drawn, as, for example, on the 'Winter Dance Party Tour' in 1959 where the



Frankie Sardo (above) was a little-known name on the 'Winter Dance Party' roster of 1959. In contrast, Paul Anka (below) was a crowd-pulling big name to top any bill, as audience reaction attests.

line-up included Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, the Big Bopper, and Dion and the Belmonts. At the small town of Clear Lake, Iowa (with a population of around 30,000) the tour's venue was filled by a crowd estimated at as many as 1500 teenagers, each paying one dollar 25 cents admission.

In the South and Southwest of the United States, the tradition of travelling music shows (in the form of country and western packages) was more firmly established than in the East and, with rockabilly artistes springing from the ranks of country music, many early rockers like Elvis Presley joined Southern tours with more established veterans like Hank Thompson or Marty Robbins. At these shows, the age differential was usually rather great and, to satisfy the youngsters attending, promoters would often toss the rock'n'rollers on stage early in the proceedings, hoping that the troublemaking teenagers would exit as soon as their favourites had completed their acts.

A particular type of package tour was that organised by the small independent record companies as an economical way of gaining their artists maximum exposure. During 1955 Elvis headlined a series of package tours for Sun Records – one such had Elvis topping the bill, supported by Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash and Warren Smith. Most of the tours were based around Memphis, though forays were occasionally made into Texas.

Another important area of operations for rock packages was the Midwest. The big stars were seldom prepared to visit the towns that dotted the states of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa, but most towns had venues large enough to make a well-organised package a reasonably profitable business. The basic theory of the package tour was to showcase minor stars, who in themselves would have little drawing power, with one or two big name attractions guaranteed to pull in the crowds. The 'Big Show of 1961' was a typical example, starring Chuck Berry and the Drifters, supported by ex-Drifter Bobby Hendricks, Texan singer Gene Summers and a small Texas-based group called the Bill Smith Combo. Similarly, the organisers of the 'Winter Dance Party Tour' persuaded Buddy Holly to head the package and draw the crowds required to make the exploit a viable proposition.

Hardships of the road

The life on the road for package-tour musicians was invariably arduous: much of the time was spent travelling, and hundreds of miles had to be covered between a succession of one-night stands. Indeed it was Holly's disenchantment with the exhaustive touring schedule of the Winter Dance Party that led him to charter the plane in which he was to meet his death. But despite the many hardships of the road, package tours did afford an excellent opportunity for up-and-coming stars to get a level of coverage that would otherwise have been impossible.

The mingling together of musicians and singers from different areas and backgrounds helped further bridge racial and musical divides. And the bringing together of such ostensibly different kinds of artists as Buddy Holly and saxophonist King Curtis would probably never have occurred were it not for rock'n'roll package tours. Of course, there was the other side of the coin as well, as in the famous stories about Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis often being on the verge of murdering each other in battles over who would close a gala rock'n'roll concert. Such scenes were, however, comparatively rare.

In general terms, both the scene and the artists were new to the game of touring, with youngsters from across the country getting their first glimpses of big towns and areas of the country as well as of their peers in the music industry. Package tours were a phenomenon of rock in its infancy of the Fifties and early Sixties; they brought the music back to smalltown America.

BILLY ALTMAN

G.I. BLUES

Elvis Presley left the US Army an all-round entertainer

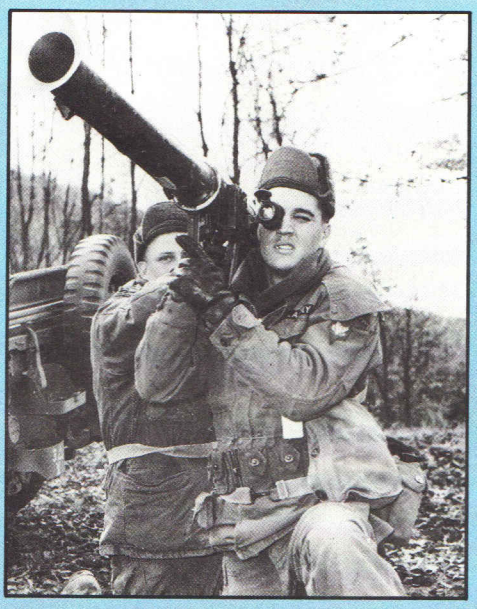
ELVIS PRESLEY hit the road on a particularly demanding European tour in March 1958. Despite a non-stop run of chart-topping hits, Presley had not ventured outside the United States before. His two-year absence from his homeland was to be a tour of duty, the promoter being the US Army; Presley had been called up for national service.

Elvis had his pre-draft medical check in January 1957 at the Kennedy Veterans' Hospital in Memphis, and he passed with flying colours. He was actually the only would-be recruit on parade that day, as the authorities correctly anticipated a great deal of media interest.

Elvis had originally been due to join up on 20 January 1958, but he was also due to start work on the movie *King Creole* in that same week. Paramount Pictures had already sunk 300,000 dollars into the movie planning, and the draft board granted Elvis a 60-day deferment. This gesture led to some controversy, which was compounded by Colonel Parker's activities – he attended Elvis' official induction ceremony toting massive balloons advertising the forthcoming movie.

Presley was diplomacy itself: 'Whatever the Army people want me to do is fine. I don't expect any special privileges or favours. The officers expect discipline and respect and that's what I'll give them.' But millions of pop fans were outraged at the thought of their hero being taken away for two years – the equivalent of a whole rock'n'roll lifetime.

'You didn't put Beethoven in the Army, did you?' roared one fan on the phone to the chairman of Local Board 86, the offending authority. 'Well, sir,' replied the official, 'considering that Beethoven wasn't an American citizen, has been dead for some time and would have been 4-F with ear trouble anyway, I don't suppose we could have done much with him.'



Elvis and Uncle Sam

Presley's recruitment inspired a spate of singles by unknown artists. Song titles included 'Dear 53310761' (Elvis' service number), 'Bye Bye Elvis', 'All American Boy' (which included the line, 'Then one day my Uncle Sam said "Here Ah am"') and, perhaps inevitably, 'Marchin' Elvis'.

The singer's early weeks in 'A' Company, Second Medium Tank Battalion, Second Armoured Division, were littered with comments from fellow rookies such as 'Missing your teddy bears, Elvis?' and 'By the right wiggle – march'. In-between times, he had to duck in and out of barracks to avoid the attentions of locally-based girl fans. He stood up to it all

Soldier Elvis in fact and fiction: during US Army exercises in Germany (above left) and filming G. I. Blues *(below), his first post-army screen release.*

manfully, however, refusing an assignment to sing with the Special Services.

As he banged his size 12 regulation boots into the parade ground during basic training in the States, Presley must have been gratified by the critical reaction to *King Creole*. One critic reviewed it as 'the best Elvis movie performance to date', while another opined: 'Acting is his assignment in this shrewdly-upholstered showcase – and, by God, he does it.'

After basic training Presley recorded a few numbers in studios while on leave in Nashville, Tennessee. It was all part of the stockpiling operation, because Elvis had by now been told that he was destined for Europe. In August 1958 tragedy struck: Elvis' beloved mother died of a heart attack, prompted by hepatitis. Disconsolate, Elvis set up a ten-foot monument to her, the main epitaph reading 'She was the sunshine of our home'.

Germany greets the 'King'

Elvis' eventual departure from the US was itself turned into a record, while his arrival at Bremerhaven was treated as a German national event. His final destination was a US Army base in the hills outside Friedberg, near Frankfurt, where Elvis' father and grandfather later joined him, to live off-base.

While Presley literally soldiered on, Colonel Parker continued the supervision of the superstar's career in the United States. Despite the stockpiling of recordings, special care had to be taken about just how much material was fed into an avaricious marketplace. There was even a time, in late March 1959, when Elvis had nothing in *Billboard's* Hot Hundred singles chart. 'A Fool Such As I' ended this brief barren spell and provided Elvis Presley with his nineteenth consecutive gold disc award. Meanwhile, the Colonel organised repeat screenings of various Presley movies, sometimes as double-features, triggering further interest in the far-away GI and boosting further sales of the soundtrack albums.

So Elvis Presley remained the hero. The rocking rebel retained his old fan-following, even though he was even more unavailable than ever before; and by his show of patriotism he was also winning over some of his older critics.

His only – albeit impromptu – stage appearance in 15 months was during a leave period in Paris when he allowed himself to be dragged on stage at the famed Lido.

The army career ran on as if scripted by Tom Parker: Elvis rose to lead a three-man reconnaissance team for the 32nd Scout Platoon. One officer said of Presley: 'He's fooled us all. We had our stomach full to *here* of these celebrities, singers and actors, and we figured Elvis Presley for just another lightweight. But he's never angled himself into anything easy and he shows exceptionally good judgement for a kid worth a few million dollars. This guy Elvis has made it popular to be a good soldier.'

Charts and courtship

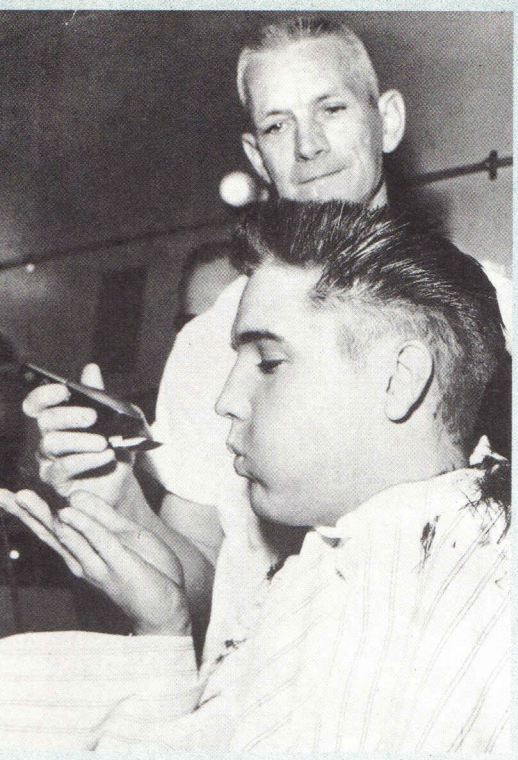
There was no way the many Elvis Presley fans in Europe could know that his Army service in Germany was the nearest they would ever get to seeing the superstar in action, but his impact on rock'n'roll worldwide continued without a break. Presley's German sojourn was also significant in another – totally different – respect; it was there that he met 14-year-old Priscilla Beaulieu, an officer's daughter. Their on-off courtship was to last until May 1967, when they married.

When Elvis left the Army on 5 March 1960 his recording career had suffered no damage despite his long absence. In the States Colonel Parker had kept up the flow of record releases, none of which had flopped. Thus, for instance, he had 'Wear My Ring Around Your Neck' riding at Number 3 in the chart as he staggered through the first weeks of recruit training. 'Hard Headed Woman' got to Number 2 a couple of months later, while 'One Night'/'I Got Stung' was a double-sided success as Elvis celebrated his first Christmas in the Army. In 1959, his hits included 'A Fool Such As I' and 'Big Hunk Of Love'. Following his discharge, the first single Elvis put out, 'Stuck On You', went to Number 1, just as if he'd never been away. The same titles scored in Britain, and most other territories.

The Army had helped Elvis build an international reputation with people of all ages. Those who had derided him decided he couldn't be all bad if he was such a good soldier, while younger fans accepted his movement towards the establishment simply because nobody any better had appeared on the rock'n'roll scene – this despite the industry's enthusiastic promotion of such singers as Paul Anka and Frankie Avalon.

The Elvis who left the US Army was a trimmed-down, shorter-haired and calmer version of the rocker who had enlisted two

Pictured in the audience at the Paris Lido during an eight-day leave period in June 1959, Presley was not allowed to remain off stage for long: an impromptu appearance was demanded once the reluctant superstar was identified.



years before. The gap had enabled him to gain widespread acceptance and to move towards Las Vegas, to the role of 'all-round entertainer' and to an earning capacity unparalleled in pop music.

His Army stint was the only time Elvis spent, bar a day or two on holiday, outside the United States. But his presence in Germany exercised a tremendous effect on rock worldwide, not just for the fans trying to get a peek at him on parade in Germany, but for the many artistes trying to copy his original style – and the thousands of new performers who figured that Presley's absence might make fans that much fonder of those who were still in action.

Elvis Presley returned home to a radio network tribute to him as 'a musical, cultural and military phenomenon'. At the same time Senator Estes Kefauver was inserting a tribute to the singer in the Congressional Record. There was no doubt that by luck and shrewd judgement, Elvis had advanced his career further in two years out of the spotlight than most singers would achieve in a musical lifetime.

PETER JONES

Above left: Much was made by the US Army publicity machine of Elvis' new haircut. The famous sideburns were not to reappear until the late Sixties. Above: Sergeant Presley shows off his stripes. Below: German fans bid the 'King' farewell as he leaves for the US.

SMALLTOWN DREAMERS

The route to rock stardom in Fifties America

ONE OF THE MORE FASCINATING aspects of the rise of rock'n'roll in the Fifties was the creation of a new production line – one which turned out a never-ending stream of rock stars from all parts of the USA.

Although most major record companies in 1956 went to great lengths to try to play down the effect of rock'n'roll in general, and of Presley in particular, on teenage America, the trends sweeping the country were rapidly picked up by the hundreds of independent labels spread nationwide. They sought to capitalise on the new-found audience with records specifically geared to exploit their likes and needs. The watershed of Presley's arrival resulted in the success of a shoal of new artists, eager to make their way in the new music. A new kind of teenager was being created in America: a teenager with his own language, his own fashion, his own music, and a desire to keep as great a distance from his elders as possible. Beginning in 1956, teenagers in the US began to dream of fame, fortune and immortality – not to mention cars and girls – as rock'n'roll stars. They were being presented a vision of a future of financial and personal success outside the confines of the conventional world. The problem, especially for smalltown teenagers, was how to get their careers started.

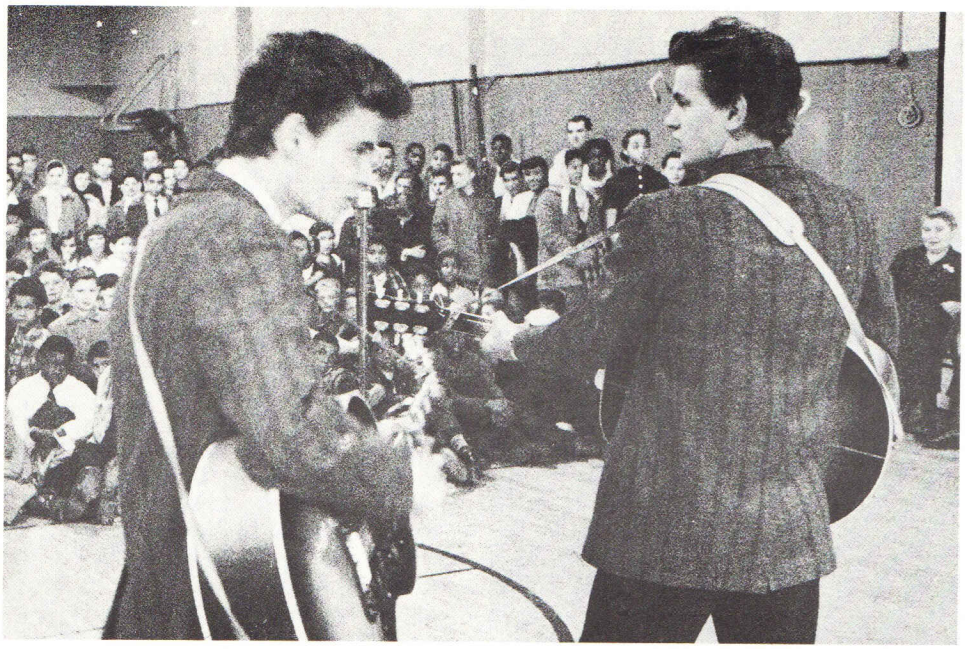
Limited opportunities

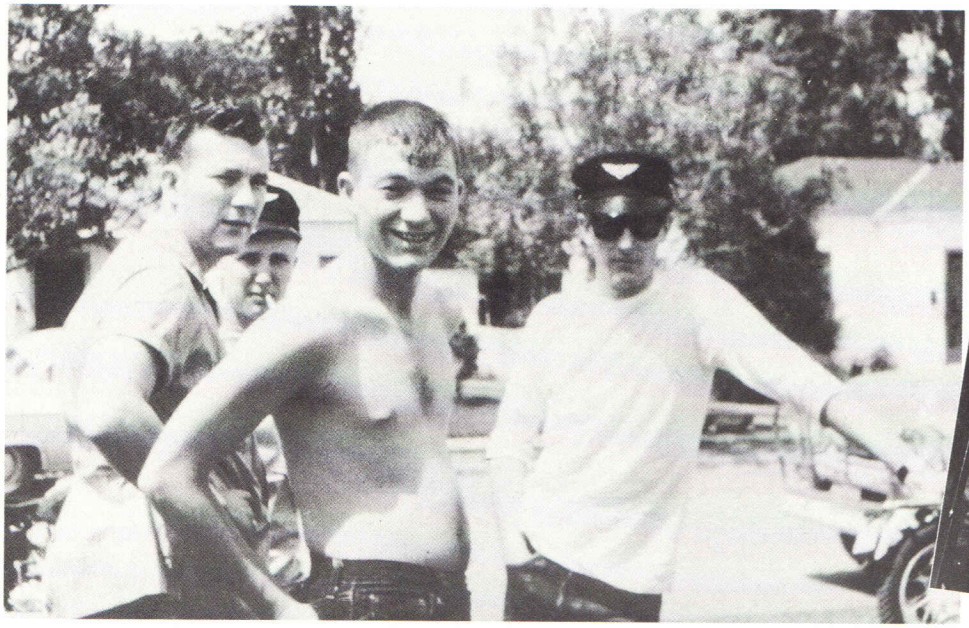
Venues in which aspiring singers, musicians and performers could attempt to learn and practise their craft were indeed limited in the Fifties. The best they could usually hope for in most parts of the country was a spot as entertainment for a high-school sock hop or social, while in the South and Southwest there were a few juke-joints that would risk hiring unknowns, though rarely for weekend dates.

Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers happily left the street corner for the concert stage, trading streetlamps for the spotlight.

Live concerts and tours were mainly for top recording stars or up-and-coming artists with records that were regional hits. Throughout the Fifties, though, the main communication of rock'n'roll in America was through 45 rpm singles, which could be recorded locally for a small independent and then attain regional – maybe national – success. Therefore many local hopefuls would audition for the small record company near them, or the closest company that specialised in the kind of music that the new artist or group played.

As more and more young people entered the field of rock'n'roll, both the kinds of songs written and the styles of performing the music swiftly began to change. Both rhythm and blues and country music, the main ingredients of rock'n'roll, were





Left: Don and Phil Everly play to the kids.
Below left: The Crickets in Lubbock.
Below: Chicano idol Ritchie Valens.

generally dance-oriented forms that often dealt with physical (as opposed to romantic) love, drinking and carousing, and other topics geared towards their particular audiences. These audiences found that R&B and country music treated situations they found in real life in ways that conventional pop did not; hence their respective popularities. In satisfying the needs of teenagers, rock'n'roll was soon concerning itself lyrically with the many facets of teen life, from problems with parents and other authority figures (as in 'Wake Up Little Susie', and 'Summertime Blues') to school ('School Day', 'Charlie Brown') and romance.

Hearts on their sleeves

It was in that last-mentioned category of romance that the most interesting changes took place, since love among teenagers always was, and probably always will be, such an unstable condition. Young artists writing about their own experiences – necessarily limited by their tender age – expressed all manner and form of teen emotion. Paul Anka's 'Puppy Love' and the Everly Brothers' 'Maybe Tomorrow' both sorrowfully protested parental beliefs that teenage love wasn't really 'real', Buddy Holly's 'Peggy Sue' and Eddie Cochran's 'Somethin' Else' reflected the physical desires of the adolescent male, while Connie Francis' 'Frankie' gave the no-holds-barred, heart-on-the-sleeve female point of view. The 'dreamy', idyllic, romantic side of teen love was most prominent in group harmony songs like the Teenagers' 'Why Do Fools Fall in Love', and the arbitrariness and frivolity of relationships came across on 'Gonna Get Along Without You Now', a song that, interestingly enough, was performed by two sisters named Patience and Prudence who were barely into puberty.

What helped to differentiate the artistes noted above was the fact that all of them, though they began performing as teenagers, came from distinctly varied geographical and cultural backgrounds, and their individual styles mirrored the kind of music that each had come to learn and attempt. They can roughly be divided into three groups.

Steps to stardom

The first category of performer comprised the singers and musicians most influenced by rock'n'roll, country and rhythm and blues. In the South, where rockabilly ruled, young singers grew long sideburns, twitched nervously as they strummed their guitars and breathed heavily as they sang. For Buddy Holly, a concert appearance on the same bill with Presley helped galvanise the desire for fame and stardom and, more importantly, re-routed his musical direction away from the country and western he had been playing and more towards the high-energy rock'n'roll Presley played. But one didn't have to be from the South to play rockabilly: Californians Eddie Cochran, Ricky Nelson and Ritchie Valens shared little else besides a love for these fast-paced, big beat, guitar-heavy sounds. Valens crossed the Spanish rhythms of Mexican music with rockabilly to create, in his version of 'La Bamba', the most lasting example of 'Chicano' rock, while Nelson became the first television-created teen idol, growing up little by little each week on parents Ozzie and Harriet's situation-comedy show. Cochran, born in the Midwest, neatly reflected the Hollywood image of the rabble-rousing teenager – cool, tough and wise-cracking outside, misunderstood and genial inside, fun loving to the end.

Of course, playing instruments and having a band required both the money to get those instruments and a place in which to rehearse. But voices and street

corners were free, and most big cities in the US spawned hosts of harmony, or doo-wop groups. Although the harmony group format was rather narrow in terms of the kinds of songs sung, the great numbers of lower and middle-class teens hoping to be stars and bereft of musical instruments or training formed a second category of young hopefuls. Kids in cities like New York and Philadelphia would practice in doorways and school lavatories, piecing together scraps of melodies for original songs, twisting old standards or thinking up novelty-styled tunes.

Essential to all these groups was a clear tenor lead voice and a dead-bottomed bass singer, the latter of whom was entrusted to think up and execute nonsense syllable vocal refrains. There was pride in being the best doo-woppers on the block or in the neighbourhood, as evidenced by Dion and the Belmonts naming themselves after their street in the Bronx. And the appeal of teens making music for teens led to the enormous (though short-term) success of the appropriately-named Teenagers, whose 13-year-old lead singer, Frankie Lymon, wrote their biggest hit, 'Why Do Fools Fall in Love'. This was street-corner music at its best.

Rise of the balladeers

It was the final category of aspiring pop stars, the balladeers and solo singers, that brought the first golden era of rock'n'roll to an end at the close of the Fifties. Shrewd record companies, managers, publishers and producers were constantly on the lookout for good-looking, clean-cut teens who could be moulded into star material, and the naïveté and trust of teen audiences facilitated the rise not only of *shlockmeisters* like Paul Anka, but of a great number of Philadelphia-based singers like Bobby Rydell, Frankie Avalon and Fabian. These Philadelphians recorded for newcomer independent labels Chancellor and Cameo-Parkway, both of which used the media exposure of the Philly-based 'American Bandstand' television show to force-feed their acts to the public, while also enabling radio programmers to cut down on the number of black records being played.

Teen idols of the Fifties: Bobby Rydell (above left), Frankie Avalon (above) and Dion and the Belmonts (below left).

Rydell, Avalon and Fabian were all picked primarily for their looks and potential image, with their singing or performing talent often a minor consideration. Their success demonstrated all too well that teenagers could be exploited not only into liking rock'n'roll, but into liking music being passed off as rock'n'roll, which featured none of its characteristics except that a teenager was presenting it. The rise of the new teen pop idols, who more resembled the pre-Presley singing stars of yesteryear than rockers, effectively brought American rock'n'roll in the Fifties to an end. It would not be until the Beatles and the Rolling Stones invaded the States in 1964 that American teenagers would again dream of rock'n'roll stardom, start practising in garages and on street corners, and revitalise their music.

BILLY ALTMAN

THE GREAT MUSICIANS

Jaco Pastorius

Anyone can play like Jaco Pastorius – all you have to do is buy a fretless Fender Jazz Bass and pluck the strings close to the bridge to get that hard, middley sound. Easy? Well, not exactly. You also have to obtain fantastic technique from somewhere, not to mention the ability to play your way through the chord changes of sophisticated tunes as fluently as if you were singing – and singing well. And then there's the small matter of swing, groove, feel – call it what you like; if it isn't there, all the high-speed playing in the world won't help you.

Pastorius has, in addition to a melodious name, all these qualities to an extent that makes other bass players contemplate the unfairness of life, and, since joining Weather Report in 1976, he has inspired imitators everywhere. Weather Report must be considered the premier jazz-rock band in the world and, although a lot of propaganda goes into selling them, you can't escape the fact that the band contains three brilliant musicians: Wayne Shorter on saxes, Joe Zawinul on keyboards and the elfin-faced Pastorius.

The first thing that hits you about his playing is that clear, singing tone, mostly in the middle and high parts of the bass guitar's range; sustained notes that flow along parallel to the other musicians' lines and end with a flourish – a skipping melodic phrase leading to the next section, or a sudden two-string swoop. There is never any thunderous low-register pounding; whenever a low note appears it is used as the harmonic bottom of the chord, a base from which to leap off into another melodic excursion. The only other innovatory electric bassist to use this approach is the German, Eberhard Weber.

It is important to note that Pastorius plays bass guitar exactly as the instrument's name suggests: a guitar that happens to be tuned an octave lower. Most jazz-influenced bassists really only use the electric bass as a louder and more portable double bass, playing steady, bottom-end lines except when taking a solo. The Fender bass *is* a different instrument, but it has taken nearly 30 years for most musicians to realise it. Pastorius plays a Fender Jazz Bass which he has customised by removing the frets and filling the gaps with plastic wood.

Of course, Weather Report was the ideal band for Pastorius to join. The music has spaces, the rhythm is implied rather than beaten over the head with a sledgehammer and the compositions are both harmonically and melodically interesting. When Joe Zawinul founded the band in 1971 he described the musicians' intentions thus: 'We won't be doing that jazz thing, with one guy soloing and the others accompanying him. We'll all be soloing all the time.' They've kept close to that concept through all the personnel changes and Pastorius has fitted it perfectly.

It was not a case of a callow youth being given the chance to study under the master when Pastorius was plucked from the obscurity of playing in Florida bars (as the legend goes). From the evidence of his playing on just two tracks of Weather Report's *Black Market*, and his own solo album, both released in 1976, he was already fully fledged and ready to influence the sound of the band.

Those two tracks on *Black Market* give a good idea of his range. On 'Cannonball', the bass comes in with strength and restraint, and that glorious warm sound develops with all the now-famous touches – double-stopping (playing chords like a guitar), the use of harmonics (lightly touching the string at certain points with the left hand while plucking with the right to sound bell-like overtones), and exploiting the fretless neck of the bass to the full, gliding from note to note. 'Barbary Coast', his own composition, has him bubbling away, flicking staccato notes in all directions, syncopating like a madman and employing his characteristic high-speed triplet fills (achieved by plucking the strings with three fingers in very rapid succession).

More recently Pastorius has been involved with Joni Mitchell. Whatever you may feel about her shift from acoustic, guitar-based folk to the music on her album dedicated to the late Charlie Mingus, jazz composer, bassist and innovator extraordinaire, it has to be admitted that she gave Pastorius a wonderful opportunity to reach an even wider audience. The playing on *Mingus* is some of his best on record, all the craft developed and refined to perfection.

My only criticism of Pastorius derives from a dislike of epic onstage solo spots. It's all tremendous technically but for me it means so much more when played with others as part of a song rather than as an exhibition-piece. But don't let that stop you going to see Pastorius: he is a great musician, a true master of his instrument.

HUGH HOPPER

Below: Pastorius with Weather Report and (overleaf) a close-up of him playing fretless bass.

THE HISTORY OF

Rock